

MINISTERING TO THE NEEDS OF
INDIVIDUALS AT-RISK FOR
TEENAGE PREGNANCY

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
PREFACE.....	vii
DEDICATION.....	ix
EPIGRAPH.....	x
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTERS	
1. MINISTRY FOCUS – A WOMANIST PERSPECTIVE.....	7
2. THE STATE OF THE ART IN THIS MINISTRY.....	16
3. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS	30
4. METHODOLOGY	54
5. FIELD EXPERIENCE	57
6. REFLECTION, SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION.....	61
APPENDIX	
A. GUIDELINES FOR TRAINING SPIRITUAL COUNSELORS.....	65
B. MEETING GUIDELINES.....	71
C. RECRUITMENT MATERIAL.....	73
D. CONSENT FORM.....	75
E. COMMITMENT LETTER.....	77
F. ADDITIONAL COUNSELING TRAINING FORMS.....	79
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	89

ABSTRACT

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This study was concerned with youth at-risk for teenage pregnancy. Calvary Baptist Church of Glenwood, Illinois was the context for this project where the researcher is an Associate Minister. Participants learned scriptural and theological information regarding pastoral care to at-risk communities. In order to provide pastoral care to those in need, guidelines were developed and used to assist participants in making better life decisions. Qualitative research techniques included a pre-test and post-test to measure attitudinal changes. The results affirm that youth who received the pastoral care guidelines made positive behavioral changes.

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Thanks to God who spoke to my friend Rev. Laura Lea and said, “Tell Cartha about the Doctor of Ministry Program at United Theological Seminary.” Thank you, Laura.

Thanks to Dr. Peggy Way, Pastoral Care and Counseling mentor, and Dr. Emma J. Justes, Academic Advisor for their guidance throughout the years, and seeing me through the Doctor of Ministry Program. With gratitude and appreciation, I thank Dr. Morven Ngaiyaye and Linda Mitchell-Cooper, my professional advisors who never stopped believing in me, and helped to shape, and frame this project.

Thank you to spiritual friends, professional associates, and context associates for going beyond the call of duty during this process. Thanks to Dr. Damon Jones who in the last hour helped me in this endeavor.

And, finally, to my sons Kent Woodward, whom God called to a better place, late one Thursday evening, and, who now looks down on me still saying, “I knew you could do it;” and last but certainly not least, to my son Keith Woodward who continues to believe and encourage me in the work God has given me to do.

EPIGRAPH

“Pastoral Care has to do with teaching and educating, it is not just counseling.”

--- *Peggy Way*

DEDICATION

To my loving, husband Edward. Without your assistance, I would have never completed this project. Thank you for your love, devotion, and unwavering faith in me.

INTRODUCTION

It is the belief of the researcher that God has given her the gift to be a counselor/teacher. In that assignment, God has given her a listening ear, and the capacity to be compassionate without disabling, while inviting the people of God to attain their highest calling. The passion she feels in her soul is to be an advocate for her sisters who are in crises.

During the years 1990 through 1996, the researcher had the opportunity as a certified owner of a secondary school, certified by the State of Illinois Board of Education, to be involved with the career training of women who came from disadvantaged circumstances. She also assisted women who lost their jobs due to downsizing and those who were forced out of the system of receiving aid from the State of Illinois for themselves and their children.

The researcher was involved in the lives of these women for a period of nine months each year. The women came for career training and job placement. During a six-year period, the school was fortunate to train over 500 women who received certificates of completion and was able to secure employment for over 75% of the women in the area of their training. From these women, the researcher learned how many of their lives changed because of teenage pregnancy. It made her aware that these women's lives might have been different, if there had been educational guidelines to inform their decision making to transform them at an earlier age.

The researcher's abilities to work with her sisters in Christ have been many. God has empowered her with administrative skills, a compassionate heart and an ability to understand the feeling of others.

The most important gift among pastoral care skills is the ability to be an effective listener, and open to the Holy Spirit's guidance and direction. Others have affirmed that her personality is open and receptive. She strives to live within the Golden Rule, "*Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.*" She also strives to live in accordance with the two commandments that Jesus gave to His disciples:

"When the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question to test Him. "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the greatest and first commandment. And the second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."¹

If people conformed to these two commandments, there would be limited noncompliance to the laws given to Moses by God; the Ten Commandments. The love of God and humankind establishes the formation of how we act toward our fellow sisters and all humankind. Jesus' mission stressed justice in His teaching and ministry.

"Bless are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are the merciful for they will receive mercy. Blessed are the pure at heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peace makers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."²

¹ Matthew 22:37-40 (NRSV).

² Matthew 5:3-12 (NRSV).

According to the Chicago Public Schools, challenges faced by at-risk youth generally manifest themselves in the following ways:

- Academic difficulties that effect school performance
- Social/emotional difficulties that influence school performance
- Teen pregnancy
- Family crisis
- Lingering or terminal illness
- Frequent suspensions from school
- Need for positive adult role models
- Need for someone to listen
- Low self-esteem
- Need to set and achieve personal goal
- Traumatic events
- Lack of hope for a better future
- Multiple losses over a short period³

The researcher was committed to connecting her Biblical/Theological understanding of care with the particular/specific context and behavior manifestation of a particular population of such at-risk youth. The purpose of this study was twofold: (1) to explore the literature on early Christian experiences, scriptural and theological teaching regarding pastoral care that the church should provide to those in need, such as those at-risk for teenage pregnancy and (2) to develop a set of guidelines that may be used in helping individuals at-risk for teenage pregnancy.

The writer believes that much of the pain and suffering experienced by many youth today is avoidable, if not preventable, when appropriate programs are available. To alleviate such pain and suffering is not only a moral obligation on the part of society; it is also an imperative of Christian ethics to impact at-risk teens and to invite them to chose behaviors that are not injurious to themselves or their communities. One definition of

³ Counselor/Socialworker Conference (Counselees), Youth Challenges (Handouts), (Chicago, IL: CPS Press; Publishing House Office of High School Development, 2004-2005), 1-8.

Christian is to be Christ like. Christ came ministering to the poor, to the hungry and the sick. Today, at-risk teens are suffering, and *Christians* should be listening for and ministering to their needs. Most African American Churches are struggling to deal with these issues. In this study, we will seek to discover the means and strategies for dealing with a particular troubled youth population of Calvary Baptist Church of Glenwood.

The Bible presents the greatest lessons or challenges to those who would be Jesus' ministers, when Jesus said, "feed my sheep."⁴ Jesus himself demonstrated this responsibility when the multitudes of people afflicted with pain and suffering, indigent and hungry followed him into the mountain. Looking at the hungry multitudes who were obviously neglected or rejected by the rest of society, Christ felt such deep compassion that he turned to his disciples to find whatever food was available so that the hungry would be fed.

Then saith He unto His disciples, "The harvest is plenteous but the laborers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the Harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest."⁵

The particular population with whom this study is concerned is that of today's young women who are daily confronted with increased sexualized images and message, which lead them to think and believe that their risky behavior will have no consequences.

⁴ John 21:16 (NKJV).

⁵ Matthew 9:37-38 (NKJV).

The researcher intends to develop a curriculum of compassion and challenge as young women are provided proper counseling and the appropriate services, their attitude should change from being detrimental to a more positive sense of self worth and an ability to see themselves as well deserving of all the benefits enjoyed by Christian young women as well as educated people. As proper counseling and appropriate services are made available to individuals, positive changes in attitude should follow from one's feelings of worthlessness to those of a positive perception regarding one's dignity. This change in attitude could be the genesis for behavior change and generating hope for the future, among these high risk individuals.

The writer believes that Jesus Christ came to earth to befriend the poor, the hungry, the destitute and all who were in need of a friend. She has quoted several bible verses that Jesus himself spoke to his disciples. It is the belief of the writer that all young women should have a life filled with hope. Pastoral Care Counselors being disciples should bear the responsibility to guide young women in ways that will certainly constitute change in their attitude. This study is conceived within an understanding of the importance of education and guidance in pastoral care practices. The study is organized in the following manner.

Chapter one presents the writer's spiritual journey, the context of the study, the individuals who were involved in the study, and the factors that indicated a need for this type of study. As this writer looks back over her life, it is with an understanding that God's hand has been gently guiding her on a journey that has become more and more explicit.

Chapter two provides an explanation of the writer's passion for developing an effective project for these particular at-risk youth. The writer's ministry model will be examined.

Chapter three presents the theoretical foundations for designing the study. This chapter will focus on the biblical, theological and historical foundation that has been the underpinning for shaping this project.

Chapter four presents the model and design for collecting data and strategies used to test the hypothesis. Chapter five presents a discussion of results derived by the model.

Chapter six presents a summary of the study and reflections on the knowledge gained by the research project as well as recommendations for future study or activities.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

The writer is Cartha Lee McDowell; she is the second daughter and the last child born to her mother and father. The writer's family was originally sharecroppers in the state of Mississippi. After her birth in February 1941, her family came to live in Chicago during that summer; she was six months old.

The writer's mother was not married to her father. She was a single parent with two girls who had to live with her mother. The writer and her sister had two mothers, their birth mother, Ella Mae and their grandmother, Big Mama. Big Mama was a small woman in stature. She was fondly called Big Mama by the family and all the people who came to know her. She spoke softly, but could and would handle any situation that faced her.

Big Mama was the mother of seventeen children, all by the same husband, Allen, who died when his last child, fondly called Buddy, was about two years old. Big Mama never re-married. In 1941, Big Mama was 59 years old; her date of birth was January 2, 1882, and, she was a devout Christian woman.

Big Mama raised the writer and her sister, Betty, while Ella Mae found work in the factories of Chicago. Big Mama died in 1956, the same year Betty married. The writer was fifteen years old at the time, and Betty was seventeen. Today, Betty is still married to the same man, Willie, after 52 years.

The writer married in 1960 when she was 19 years old and had two sons, Kent born in 1960 and Keith born in 1962. When the writer was seven years old, her mother married her “father.” He was not her biological father, but he became the only father she and her sister Betty acknowledged.

He was a good man, a good provider and a special person in their lives. Her mother was married to Willie Lee for fifty years. He died the year of their fiftieth anniversary. He is greatly missed.

The writer was educated in the Chicagoland area from elementary school through college. As a child growing up, she developed a love for reading. While she was in grammar school – starting around the 5th grade, she started walking to the library (which was approximately a mile from her house) to take out books to read. The writer would lose herself in the stories. She always enjoyed reading mysteries and, to this day, she still is somewhat of a mystery buff.

The writer’s love for reading gave her an advantage in her learning skills. She was able to graduate from grammar school at the age of twelve, third in her class. She continued her education in high school, where she also did well. She graduated with honors from high school at the age of sixteen.

It had been the writer’s intentions to continue on with her education but she needed to work a year to earn money to attend college. At that time, there were very few grants being given for college expenses to African Americans. The writer graduated from high school in January, 1958.

The first decision made by the writer was to pursue an accounting career. She was employed by the Johnson Publishing Company in 1962. She continued her education,

taking evening classes after working during the day. She was promoted to the position of Assistant Comptroller at Johnson Publishing Company. As she advanced in her accounting career, she developed an interest in having a business of her own. Being a self starter and having strong leadership ability, the writer set out to establish her own business.

In February of 1976, the writer resigned from Johnson Publishing Company after thirteen years of employment. She divorced her husband of sixteen years and became a single parent with two teenage sons and started her own business.

After ten years in business, the writer realized she could not do it alone. She needed people to work with her, and she started recruiting. In the process she found that many prospective workers needed additional training. The writer's son, Kent, who had now graduated from college and her new husband, Edward, were working with her in the administration of the business. They made the decision to start a school to train the workers so they would be able to perform the work they were employed to do. It took approximately two years for the school to get certified with the State Board of Education as a State Certified Secondary School in the State of Illinois.

In 1988, McDowell Business Services, Inc. and McDowell Business Training Center came into existence. The purpose (mission) of the school was to provide specialized training programs for individuals seeking to develop/increase their business related skills in preparation for employment/advancement in the business world.

The writer's son Kent and her husband Edward worked alongside her in getting proposals to the City of Chicago and the State of Illinois for training dollars for dislocated workers and disenfranchised men and women who could be trained to go into

the twenty-first century job market. The first contract from the city of Chicago was awarded in February, 1990.

The writer had always been a “Christian.” She was baptized in the Baptist church when she was seven years old. Her mother, father, sister, grandmother and all her aunts, uncles and cousins were “in the church.” But now, she had to face God on her own by coming to understand more fully where she was with God and where God was in her everyday life.

The writer’s son Kent became ill in November, 1989 and taken on a different dimension during his illness. At the time, she did not realize that he was walking with God. For one year and a half Kent struggled with Lupus and on June 27, 1991 he succumbed.

Six months after Kent’s death, the writer attended a funeral where the preacher’s sermon was on the subject, “If You Love Him, Let Him Go.” During this sermon, she believes she heard the call from God to ministry. The call was for her to listen, encourage, and speak a word when needed, and lead others to have a relationship with God. It was sixteen years ago that the writer received the call and started on this present ministry journey.

God led people to her school that needed a word of encouragement and needed a listening ear. She taught them how to care for themselves and introduced them to the Creator. Her experiences as an educator converged with her business interests to deepen a vocation in ministry and care for the wholeness and souls of others.

The writer refers to Isaiah 6:1, as she reflects on the meaning of her experience, “In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up,

and the train of his robe filled the temple.”¹ She believed God wanted her to seek God’s face and to pursue the goals God had for her. She was not sure just exactly what God wanted her to do at that time, but she knew God wanted her in God’s service.

Twelve years ago McDowell Business Training Center had to close, due to failure by the City of Chicago and the State of Illinois to honor contracts with the school and corporation. The writer and her husband lost everything, including their home of 17 years. They were evicted from their home in May of 2000, but one thing they did not lose was their faith in God. “God” said ‘He’ would never leave us nor forsake us,”² and they (the writer and her husband), stood on God’s word and sought to embrace their vocation as caring Christians.

The writer has been involved with her present church, Calvary Baptist Church of Glenwood; in the Mission, Christian Education Department and Deaconess Ministries for the past ten years. In so doing, it has given her a desire to learn more about the word of God and Biblical Theological understanding of living this word through ministry. She believed that “Wisdom is the principle thing; therefore get wisdom and in all of thy getting get understanding.”³ During the past sixteen years, the writer has experienced the work of God in her life and she feel this has been her most important life experience.

The writer was licensed and ordained by her Pastor, the Rev. David Bigsby, of Calvary Baptist Church of Glenwood, Glenwood, IL, in 2004 as a Baptist Minister, under the ordination doctrines of the National Baptist Convention U.S.A. When the writer and

¹ Isaiah 6:1 (NKJV).

² Matthew 28 (NKJV).

³ Proverbs 4:7 (NKJV).

her husband were evicted from their home they had no money and very few “friends.” They stood on their faith in God and they came boldly to God and said “Father, you said, only believe and know that you can do all things”. Since that time they have not been hungry, they have a roof over their heads and they have their physical and mental health. They acknowledge the blessings of God in all areas of their lives and feel called to share these blessings.

The writer’s impression of pastoral education was to be educated to care in the manner of Christ which is pastoral care’s great challenge. She saw four historic functions of pastoral education for ministry: healing, sustaining, guiding, and reconciling. As a seminary student, there was so much the writer needed to know and to understand in her pilgrimage to seek wisdom. It was her goal at this juncture to be a sponge that could soak it all up, but be critically focused and able to release those things which would not be of value in her quest for spiritual guidance and her own ministerial vocation.

The writer had a thirst and a hunger to know the Lord better; she had a desire to share that knowledge with others and she wanted to go before others equipped to share with them a word that they too can take and go forward to share with someone else. Jesus said in the great commission, “Go therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you”⁴

The primary interest of the writer today is to work with people who are experiencing pain and suffering and need spiritual guidance and encouragement. She

⁴ Matthew 28:19-20 (NKJV).

realizes that this project focuses on a particular group of persons, and through her work with them and through this project, she will deepened her understanding of ministry itself. "Preachers proclaim the faith, theologians examine the faith."⁵ The writer is still at the crossroad of critical thinking and proclamation. Seminarians attend seminary to find out about both truthful knowledge and critical thinking about them and ministerial practices. Many African Americans do not want to think critically about religion or theology and the writer's own theology of ministry is faith based and grounded in her personal religious experience.

The writer's reflection on her theology of ministry represents both critical thinking and proclamation, that is, both sound ministerial practices and concern for the souls and salvation of God's people. In pastoral care encounters, and her clinical education in CPE, the writer successfully completed two units of CPE (Clinical Pastoral Education) training (1200 hours) in objectives and outcomes of an ACPE accredited program at South Suburban Hospital in Hazel Crest, Illinois.

CPE provides theological and professional education using the *clinical method of learning* in diverse contexts of ministry. ACPE accredited programs provide a progressive learning experience through a two level curriculum. CPE level I enables pastoral formation, pastoral competence, and pastoral reflection. CPE level II objectives define the scope of the CPE program curricula. Outcomes define the competence to be developed by students as a result of participating in the program.

The writer believes she has been and continues to be compassionate, sensitive and competent in her ability to provide care in routine and emergency situations. She prides

⁵ James Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis books, 2004), 13.

herself on being open to the Holy Spirit in being an effective preacher and leader of worship.

Finally, the writer believes she is being equipped to: 1) Care in the manner of Christ which is pastoral care's great challenge. 2) Be a blessing to help people who are homeless, hungry, depressed, confused and do not know the Lord. And, 3) Help bring the word of salvation and survival to those who would hear and whom the Lord will put in her path.

The writer wants to develop a viable working educational training model for individuals at-risk for teenage pregnancy, by developing guidelines that will incorporate academic studies, Biblical instruction, psychological and physical knowledge and other transformative and creative practices that will help transform at-risk teenager's self-perception and in behavior "Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked."⁶

The intersection of the vectors, God's work in the writer's life and God's work in her context, come together from her own experiences. Having lived in a domestic violence situation for fifteen years, having the experience of a teen-age mother and finally the call by God to be a vessel to minister to women and children God would put in her path, God showed her she could be delivered and God has given her the passion to work with other women to help them to become whole.

The writer is fully aware of resistance to sex education within many of her Denomination's churches and the hesitancy to talk directly about the factors that enters

⁶ Psalms 82:3-4 (NKJV).

into young women at-risk for pregnancy. Yet she is graced by being viewed as a mature and positive influence in her church, and believes she can bring about a dialogue helpful to the participants and the church itself.

CHAPTER TWO

THE STATE OF THE ART IN THIS MINISTRY

This project, Ministering to the Needs of Individuals At-Risk for Teenage Pregnancy, was birthed out of a compassion for young women who become pregnant outside of marriage, have babies and are themselves still babies. It has become “okay” with society for young women to have babies without the benefit of a husband and without proper parenting skills. Society and culture say “okay” to sex. In today’s world, “sex” is portrayed in newspapers, magazines, TV, computers and in most forms of media available to the public. It suggests that if “sex” is not a part of media, it will not interest the public.

Our at-risk teenagers are a major part of the public exposed to sex in the media. Today, teenagers are receiving the wrong understanding of “sex.” However, this project is not about sex. It is about putting guidelines in place to help at-risk teenage girls understand their worth. The first requirement is a willing spirit on the part of teenage girls to be obedient to God’s word. Second, these young women must see and claim for themselves who they really are.

Iyanla Vanzant speaks to young girls about self awareness and self-affirmation in her book, *Don’t Give it Away*. She says, “There will be days, sometimes months or years, when life does not make sense to you. There may be times when you feel terribly afraid, awfully confused, or downright disgusted with yourself and/or your life. This is perfectly

normal!¹ This view of the world invites young people to face their uncertainties and dilemmas as they make decisions about their behaviors in all relationships. The affirmation is about possibility and wholeness, rather than presenting a negative and/or fearful view of sex.

Focus of Ministry

Calvary Baptist Church of Glenwood is affiliated with the National Baptist Convention U.S.A. The Church stands as a self-sustaining independent church serving the south suburban area of Chicago, IL. The Calvary facility came into existence in January, 1980. Calvary church members originated from the southside of Chicago, moving to the suburb to afford their children a better educational environment.

Currently there are over 400 members (adults and children) on the membership rolls. Most members regularly attend church and are active in different ministries in the church. Calvary prides itself on being a five star Bible based church, educating its members spiritually in the letters of the Bible. The church continues to serve men, women, boys and girls leading them into the knowledge of God.

This project was started under the leadership of Pastor David Bigsby at Calvary Baptist Church of Glenwood, a pilot project, facilitated by the writer, bringing together mature women of God to gather and formulate guidelines which could be implemented at Calvary Baptist Church of Glenwood to help at-risk teenagers. However, during the

¹ Iyanla Vanzant, *Don't Give it Away! A Workbook of Self-Awareness and Self-Affirmations for Young Women* (New York, NY: A Fireside Book Published by Simon & Schuster, 1999), 67.

formation of this project, there was a change in the leadership at Calvary; David Bigsby resigned as pastor and the church began a search for a new leader/pastor. The process of finding a new leader/pastor extended beyond a year, forcing the writer to take the project outside the walls of Calvary Baptist Church of Glenwood.

The writer made many phone calls and hosted meetings with a number of women who were in some way working in ministry and/or as teacher/counselor with teenagers. These meetings were for the purpose of designing a plan that would allow the women to make the decision whether they would be comfortable in the role of counselor/teacher. Also, these women needed to have knowledge and expertise in formulating guidelines which would be the focus of the sessions with the at-risk teenagers.

The first meeting was held at the home of the writer. In attendance were six seasoned and mature Christians, each with a desire to help the youngsters and with expertise in their area of discipline. Emma Justes speaks to the identity of this group. “We identify ourselves as people who “love to tell the story,” which was clearly my researcher’s approach. It is important to remember that in order to tell the story effectively, we needed to know the person to whom the story would be told– to have some sense of where that person was on their faith journey. This cannot be discovered apart from listening.

Carroll Wises’ definition of pastoral care as communicating the gospel to persons at the point of their need has been a staple in my teaching of pastoral care.² If we are to effectively provide pastoral care, it becomes necessary to first know what a person’s point of need is. Otherwise, care becomes “a generalized shot in the dark with no target

²Carroll Wise, *The Meaning of Pastoral Care* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1966), 8.

and no consideration of the individual to whom the care is being offered.”² Listening was the key to assembling the guidelines for the at-risk teenagers. Pastoral care counselors must “hear beyond the words.”³ The listeners needed to be prepared to hear. The next meeting held was a three day retreat facilitated by the writer. Six mature women of God were invited to attend the retreat. Of the six women invited, three had been present at the first meeting held at the writer’s home. The first day of the retreat, three women arrived. These were the same three who had been at the first meeting. The purpose of this meeting was to prepare the listeners to hear the needs of individuals in the target group. One resource was Emma Justes, *Hearing Beyond the Word: How to Become a Listening Pastor*. She states,

The greatest gift we bring to the listening process is ourselves. And the most important thing to do in order to listen well is to *keep ourselves out of the way*. Here we have a fundamental paradox in listening. We bring to the task of listening to our lives of experiences---what we have learned in relationships with family and friends, in church and community, in classes and supervision for ministry. In clinical pastoral education, and in ministry experiences, something in all of this will help us understand what someone says to us, but any of this also has the potential for blocking what we are able to hear.

Human experiences draws us, as we listen to another, to “filling in” from our own lives, in which case we tend not to hear the person to whom we are “listening.” Our own experience takes the focus and abandons its potential for being a gift for listening and becomes instead a barrier to listening. Self-awareness enables us to recognize when we are getting in the way of the speaker’s story.

In order to listen accurately to another person we need unflinching, compassionate, and bold self-awareness. We only achieve self-awareness when we are able to see ourselves with

³Ibid.

appropriate humility. Effective listening emerges in a context of appropriate humility and honest self-awareness.⁴

The writer is very appreciative for the three wonderful women who heard the call to be the mentor/counselors for the young teenagers at-risk for teenage pregnancy, and, to help develop the guidelines to enable these teenagers to reclaim their youth and lost self esteem.

The retreat started with food and fellowship and then a movie. The movie was entitled “Woman thou Art Loosed”⁵ starring, T.D. Jakes. The movie was about a young woman named Michelle, who was raped by her mother’s live-in boyfriend, and lost her innocence at age twelve. Her life, for the next twenty years, was seen in flash backs. The pain, suffering and a lack of hope dominated her life because of that one night. She became a broken and disillusioned young woman. Michelle believed that she had no hope and could not be healed. It took a man of God to come and listen to her story and give her hope as she waited on death row to die for shooting the man who raped her.

WOMAN THOU ART LOOSED

The writer felt compelled to give a summation of the movie in order to provide a basis for why she chose to present this kind of film to the program participants. In many respects, the participants can easily see how choices, especially uninformed choices can lead to a long and lonely road to self destruction. The movie also illuminates the aspect of hope; that which is so desperately needed in a world when moral integrity and social responsibility seems to be nonexistent. It is the writers hope that this movie will provide a

⁴Imma Justus, *Hearing Beyond the Words: Preparing to Listen: How to Become a Listening Pastor* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006), 25.

form of situational analysis for the participants vivifying in a real way how life beyond Hollywood acting really is.

The movie opens at a church revival service with people coming to Christ; there is gunfire; three gun shots are fired by Michelle as an adult. The immediate scene moves for Michelle being an adult to her playing a game of Little Sally Walker as an eight year old girl with a boy named Todd. The movie flashes back to witness T.D. Jakes visiting Michelle in prison on death row, with Michelle saying, “What we leave on the inside can cause explosions,” as she makes a house with glue and popsicle sticks.

Primary roles are as follows; Grandma – Twanna; mother – Cassie; mother’s boyfriend – Reggie; girlfriend – Nicole; childhood friend -Todd. In the next scene, Cassie meets Reggie in line at the unemployment office and wrote her phone number down and put it in his pocket. He contacted her later and they went out to dinner; he didn’t have money to pay for the meal. Cassie lets Reggie move in with her and her daughter Michelle who was 8 years old at that time. Over time and unknown to Cassie, Reggie makes sexual advances to Michelle. Twanna, Michelle’s grandmother, meet Reggie and knew right away he was a snake.

The scene changes to real time and we find Michelle returning home after 3 years in prison with no one came to meet her at the bus stop. Therefore, she takes a bus to her mother’s house, but could not get in. T.D. Jakes tells us, Michelle’s mother, Cassie had taken the day off from work to meet her, but didn’t. Michele believes Reggie didn’t want her to come (later substantiated by her mother). She saw her next door neighbor and first

boyfriend, Todd who said he would take her to the halfway house. T.D. Jakes was on the car radio. Todd asked if he could see her again. She was his first love.

At the halfway house, Cassie is greeted by an old friend Nicole, and they begin to catch up on old times. We next find Michelle preparing to go to a revival as part of her parole stipulations. Cassie's grandmother Twanna, who owns a beauty shop, makes Michelle presentable for the revival where she sees Todd upon her arrival.

(Flashback) During the first visit from T.D. Jakes at the prison where Michelle was on death row, she tells him the story about her life and how she came to be on death row. For two years, Reggie had been living with Cassie and Michelle. One night, Reggie comes home drunk; Michelle who is years old at the time, is home alone. Reggie attacks and rapes her, taking away her innocence and hope. Trying to give her hope in a seemingly hopeless situation, T.D. Jakes tells her he believes it is never too late.

Michelle goes out to dinner with Todd after the revival. During dinner, a known drug dealer comes in and tries to persuade Michelle to go back on drugs by offering her a free hit (this was the reason she was in jail for 3 years). Todd pretends to be a police officer, Narcotic Division, and gets the dealer to leave. Todd (flash back) has compassion for Michelle and feels her pain.

(Flash back) Cassie comes home and finds Michelle's room a mess and Michelle is in her bedroom closet. With a dress full with blood, Michelle tells Cassie that Reggie raped her; immediately Cassie accuses Michelle of lying, and says the little boy down the street had been messing with her, and then Cassie makes Michelle go to grandmother, Tawanna's house. Cassie confronts Reggie and asked him if he touched Michelle, he denies it. He convinces her that he would never touch Michelle because of what she

(Cassie) means to him. He then plays her by pretending to leave her for accusing him and continues to lie about the rape.

Did she put her child over Reggie or Reggie over her child? She wanted a man and sex more than she loved her daughter. Cassie confessed that she was raped by her own father and Twanna said "it ain't no sense to hate your daddy."

(Back to death row) Michelle said she never cried after that and that she had no hope. Purvis, the drug dealer came to the halfway house where Michelle was staying, he wanted his \$5,000.00 and wanted her to come back and be a hooker for him to pay off the debt. He proceeds to beat her; she is saved by Nicole. Nicole tells her story (flash back), her relationship with Michelle and how Purvis treated her like a dog, beating her, raping her and making her sell drugs. Michelle is building a house of sticks; windows symbolize a way to see out. Reggie is with a dope dealer smoking crack, the drug dealer starts to shout at him for not paying him the money he owed him. He pulls out his gun and start shooting at Reggie. Reggie escapes and goes home and tells Cassie he wants to be honest. He talked about his smoking dope and about other women. Cassie asked him about raping Michelle, he lies and says no --- she believes him. Nicole gives Michelle a gun.

Todd comes to Michelle and asked her to think about having a relationship with him. He takes her to see his daughter. His daughter is playing the game "Little Sally Walker" and Michelle is reminded of her childhood. On her house there is no door.

On her way to revival Michelle's parole officer shows up unexpectedly. She ask Michelle for a random urine sample. The parole officer goes through Michelle's purse; Michelle has a gun in her purse which is a violation of her parole. Michelle tells about the

dress she has in her purse, 20 years old buried under her house, and that she is taking it to T.D. Jakes to put the past behind her.

At the revival Michelle hears T.D. Jakes preach about “the woman with the infirmity for 18 years (Luke 13:10-12) and how Jesus healed her. He invites those in the audience to come forth to the altar to be healed of those terrible things in their lives. If they believed that God could make them whole. Reggie goes to the altar for healing. Michelle goes to the altar, and as she knells she sees Reggie, Reggie sees her and starts toward her asking forgiveness. Michelle pulls out the gun and shoots Reggie dead.

(Flash back) Reggie is dead but we hear him saying – “Michelle please forgive me” as he comes toward her. Michelle admitted to T.D. Jakes she was wrong for getting revenge. She asked T.D. Jakes to pray for her forgiveness from God and to tell her mother Cassie she loves her and that she forgives her and has always loved her. Michelle admits that she had no right to take another person’s life. Bishop Jakes said he had been praying for her spirit and he knows that Michelle is going to be okay. He said to her – stay free, you are going to make it.

The movie was chosen by the writer to bring awareness to the participants of the consequences of innocence lost.

Curriculum for Retreat

The Audacity to Hope

1. Reflect on movie and its meaning to our at-risk teenagers and parallel that to your own story.
2. Give life to your mental images by drawing a picture. Each participant will be given supplies for this drawing.
3. Feedback from participants. Who will we talk to:
 - a. Pastors
 - b. Teachers
 - c. Physicians
 - d. Parents

What is your field of Interest? What is the issue? Turning it around becomes a problem. What lingering questions do we have that we do not know how to solve? What kind of information is needed that has not been mentioned (all should be in form of questions)?

Pregnant girls who are proud of their condition

1. What concerns comes to mind --- agitation?
2. Training (moral), how is the child being brought up at home --- what type of morals are they being exposed to?
3. What is the future of this child, how do the individual see themselves?
4. Society --- how do they assess and evaluate this child
5. Child --- how does she evaluate her own situation, proud or regret?
6. Scripture --- to what extent has these young women been exposed to scripture?

Questions --- This information becomes new knowledge ---

The focus of this study is to answer questions that have not given the writer what she needs to know. The writer was preparing these women to be in the skin of the at-risk youngsters and therefore, could better relate to their life styles.

Jesus had to prepare the disciples to be fully trained to be like their teacher. In first-century Judaism, religious leaders trained by attaching themselves to a recognized rabbi (teacher). These disciples traveled with, and learned from, their teacher, with the goal of becoming like him in knowledge and character (Lk 6:40). Jesus selects 12 men for this kind of training and they became “the disciples” of the gospels.

Conjunction of Information

Prayer is a powerful force. As we concluded the first night of the retreat, the writer, as facilitator led the group in prayer, first giving thanks for the safe journey to the retreat for all. Second, the writer prayed that God would keep watch over us as we slept in a strange place, that no hurt, harm or danger would come upon us. Finally, petition was made to God to bless our retreat and to give each of us present knowledge and understanding of what she needed to share and bring into the sessions to help in the formation of the guidelines to be used in our churches for the at-risk teenagers.

The women were asked to reflect on the movie and to bring some thoughts back to the table the next morning. One of the exercises we would be using would be Pastoral Listening. The writer/facilitator wanted to hear how closely the women had been listening to the “film” as well as watching.

Emma Justes stated, “pastoral listening takes place in a variety of contexts. First, Pastoral Listening occurs in the context of all the functions of ministry, which are located

in the contexts of a wide variety of human communities. Pastoral Listening takes place in the context of listening to us.”⁵

The writer reminded the women that we had just had a conversation with God by speaking to Him in prayer trusting that He was listening to us, and now it was time to listen for instructions. When we speak about change in others, we must first understand the change that must take place in ourselves. The next morning we talked about transformation and change in the experiences of our own lives.

Peggy Way’s book, *Created by God, Pastoral Care for all God’s People*, talked about transformation by asking the question “is human community possible? Pastoral care perspectives accompany the pilgrimage of the creature through its life cycle. Its relational needs are recognized as a dimension of its creation, and pastoral care helps creatures deal with its disappointing or devastating community experiences. What pastoral care has not done well is to participate in the shaping of communities that can attend to the human’s elemental needs for belonging in trustworthy communities of care where it can be nurtured toward wholeness and learn to line up with others.”⁶ The group explored the pilgrimage of the young women and their needs for belonging and wholeness.

Then we moved and listened to a psychosocial study of our at-risk group, using a pamphlet published by The Chicago Department of Public Health Bureau of Mental Health which was made possible by a grant from Maternal Child Health entitled “What

⁵Emma Justus, *Hearing Beyond the Words*, 78.

⁶ Peggy Way, *Created by God: Pastoral Care for All God’s People* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2005), 45.

you should know about teenage pregnancy.” Its message was geared to this at-risk population. This pamphlet gave insight to the teenage reader on the following:

- 1) How a baby can be a source of great joy and satisfaction, but how a baby also makes great demands on a parent’s time, energy and money.
- 2) How having a baby can have far-reaching effects. It may mean:
 - a) New decisions and challenges, these may include:
 - deciding about marriage
 - changing education and career plans
 - finding a place to live
 - learning to handle finances
 - b) Increased responsibilities, for example:
 - Taking care of all of a baby’s physical needs – feeding, changing, bathing, dressing, etc.
 - providing the love and attention a baby needs to thrive.
 - caring for a baby that’s crying fussy or sick.

Teenage parents face some special problems and challenges. Many aspects of a teenager’s life can be affected by parenthood, for example:

Physical Health: Complications during pregnancy are more likely among teenage girls. This is because their bodies may not yet be physically mature, even though they are able to have children. The baby’s health may be affected, too.

Emotional Health: Adjusting to the demands of child care can be stressful, especially for young, single parents unfamiliar with parenting skills. School and/or job responsibilities can make additional demands on time.

Social Life: Infants and young children must be cared for 24 hours a day. This can make dating, visiting friends, etc., inconvenient. It can also be expensive, if a baby sitter must be paid. Some teenage parents find that old friends treat them differently.

Financial Matters: Many teenagers lack the education and experience needed to get adequate jobs. Even with help from human services agencies or family members, there may not be enough money to live without financial strain.

This project design in part is to prepare the listeners to hear, explore and investigate the responses of the girls to hear their denials, fears and concerns, and to note possibly the connections between such situations and possibility of later abuse.

It also seeks to collect information and build a body of knowledge that may be used to counsel and help the teenage mother to prepare her for a brighter future and lead a more productive life.

The significance of our study will show the people who are involved how well they are meeting the visions and mission statements of the church. An underlying issue is whether and how a conservative church can discuss issues and needs of teenage pregnancy. The participants will be the primary focus. The process of preparing leaders from within the congregation is also of importance. We expect to show how important this study is and what the outcome will be.

The theoretical foundation of the study will now be considered.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

As proper counseling and appropriate services are made available to individuals, positive changes in attitude should follow from feelings of worthlessness to those of positive perception regarding one's dignity. This change in attitude may be the genesis for inviting at-risk individuals to newly experienced hope for their future. To understand the present, we must go back to the past to be able to move into the future.

The writer's spiritual journey centers on the call from God to listen and encourage, speak a word when needed, and, introduce others to a relationship with God. The writer felt her assignment was to be the spiritual director to the church and to provide a safe place for at-risk teenagers for pregnancy to find a safe space to explore their options in the congregation of Calvary Baptist Church of Glenwood.

According to Rodney Malone in the *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, "a spiritual director is a person of innate gifts, aptitude, learning, and experience who becomes involved in the guidance of others regarding prayer and the things of the spirit. While searching the scriptures, it become clear that the Apostle Paul was a spiritual director to Timothy, Tيروس and Onesimus. Pricilla and Aquila acted as directors to the zealous but inadequately instructed Apollos."¹

¹ Rodney Hunter, ed. Rodney Malon, *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1990), 1215.

The writer was committed to the role of being the spiritual director for the members of the congregation and for those at-risk teenagers who needed genuine support and guidance. In her book, *Created by God*, Peggy Way speaks to many of the issues that would be encountered when dealing with at-risk teenagers including:

1. Connect congregational care with the many partners of the caring networks that seek a humane culture.
2. Connect congregational care with four of the cutting-edge intellectual/cultural/theological issues that are generally agreed to be central to the cultural dynamics in the twenty-first century: issues of globalization; pluralism and diversity; violence especially as connected to religion; and changing perspectives in science and technology.
3. Connect congregational care with the rich and diverse history of pastoral care practices throughout history and out of this history, recognize new opportunities for new practices and the formation of caregivers.
4. Invite new ways of thinking about care as well as recognizing new resources, new perspectives, and new possibilities in responding faithfully, realistically, and creatively to the woes and gifts of the human creature... perhaps even with humility and vulnerability!"²

The writer believes that following the precepts of Peggy Way would provide an invaluable opportunity to establish new practices for the church by empowering the congregation to become sensitive to persons with challenges beyond their control, especially at-risk teenagers.

In this section we will explore various biblical, historical and theological foundations that support this project.

²Peggy Way, *Created by God: Pastoral Care for All God's People* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2005), 56.

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

Stories are a gift to the imagination. They help us imagine people and places and experiences different from our own. They help us imagine the realities of our own lives in different terms. Biblical stories also help us imagine the relationship of God with human being. They give us words to describe our own relationship with God. It is only in recent years that attention has been given to the stories of biblical women. The growing awareness of women's stories has revealed a rich variety. There are stories of queens and slaves, assassins and victims of rape, mothers and wives, sisters and in-laws. Each of these women has unique characteristics. Each of those stories is food for our imaginations."³

Webster's II, New Riverside University Dictionary defines imagination as "The power of the mind to form a mental image or concept of something that is unreal or not present. Such power of the mind used creatively."⁴ The mind is a powerful tool; when reading, the mind creates visual images allowing the reader to become a participant in the story.

The writer was an avid reader in her childhood days. The stories she read gave her a way to escape to other places. The stories would sometimes parallel her life, but in most instances, they would leave her wanting to be a part of the story. The Bible stories written about women in the Old Testament by Irene Nowell reminded the writer about her childhood days reading stories; imagining being one of the characters. Nowell's work presented the biblical characters in such a way that it became easy to escape into the story

³Irene Nowell, *Women in the Old Testament* (Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota).

⁴Noah Webster, *Webster's II New Riverside University Dictionary* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1988), 610.

and imagine actually being there. Nowell's work provided confirmation to the writer that at-risk teenagers would benefit from the story of Hagar in the Old Testament.

The story of Hagar as describe in the Old Testament book of Genesis provides a point of departure for at-risk teenagers to have hope and a sense of confidence regarding giving birth to a child with little or no provisions for long term care. Genesis 16:11 begins with the angel of the Lord speaking to Hagar at a defining moment in her life as the angel says, "Behold you are with child, and you shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, because the Lord has heard your affliction."⁵

In the ancient near eastern culture, during the writing of Genesis, it was the custom and unspoken duty for a wife to provide an heir or son for their husband. According to the account of Abram and Sarai, Sarai was barren and was unable to provide Abram an heir. Once she exceeded her childbearing years, Sarai offered her maid servant Hagar to Abram as a surrogate, or substitute in order that an heir could be born. The child born of such a liaison became the child of the wife and not the surrogate. Hagar was possibly one of the maidservants Pharaoh had given Abram at the time he took Sarai into his house, having been told she was the patriarch's sister, not his wife."⁶

Genesis 16:4 states, "So he went into Hagar, and she conceived and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress became despised in her eyes."⁷ Hagar was given in marriage to Abram by her mistress Sarai for the sole purpose of bearing an heir. Sarai

⁵Genesis 16:11 (NKJV).

⁶Who's Who in the Bible, *Reader's Digest*, The Reader's Digest Association, Inc. (Pleasantville, New York, Montreal 1994), 132-133.

⁷Ibid.

could take the child to be her own and dismiss Hagar from her presence. Hagar was aware she was being used by her mistress Sarai, but she was unable to do anything but submit. Hagar despised her mistress because she knew that if she would ever attempt to claim equality with Sarai, after having her child, Sarai couldn't sell her, but she could mark her with a slave-mark and count her among the other slaves. Hagar is most likely seen by her mistress as an "uppity slave."

Often when at-risk teenagers become pregnant, they are looked upon as being different. They could be viewed as being different because they live between two worlds; the world they knew as a teenager and that new world they have entered called "motherhood." The writer sees the tension that the teenager is wrestling with. In today's world, according to the economic status of the teenager, there may be little, if any support from the teenager's family and friends. The teenager must see the journey ahead of her as not being an easy one.

Hagar was afflicted and driven from the house. Abram refused to intervene. Many young girls are asked to leave the life they have been accustomed to by being ostracized from their peer groups. The writer reflects on her life as a teenager growing up among other female relatives and friends. During those years, unlike today, it was "taboo" for a teenager to become pregnant. Those who became pregnant were considered bad girls. The teenager was ostracized, looked upon with disdain and was not allowed to associate with the "good girls."

One such incident stands out quite vividly in the mind of the writer as a teenager. Like Hagar, an eighth grade classmate became pregnant immediately labeling her a bad

girl. The “good girls” were told they could no longer play with her, or be her friend. The writer remembers that she could no longer be this girl’s friend, but how she had compassion for her.

Specifically, in this study we must seek an understanding of such contextual and developmental issues as:

- The place of sexuality in human identity and in scripture.
- Understanding what makes young girls get into this situation.
- Moral training - how is the child being brought up at home?
- What is the future of this child?
- How do the individuals see themselves?
- How does society assess or evaluate the child?
- How does the child evaluate her situation – pride or regret?
- Have these children been exposed to scripture in their lives?

We might be able to identify Hagar in at least three of the issues we have described above. The first is coming to an understanding of what makes young girls get into situations that leads to an overall reduction in their quality of life potential. As we follow the story of Hagar, we find that she is not in control of her life. The pregnancy came about because Hagar was compelled to do what she is told. After she realizes she is pregnant, she then looks upon her mistress with disdain.

The ancient law code of Hammurabi (18th century B.C.E.) provides an understanding of Sarah’s giving of her maid to her husband. There is precedent for a barren wife using a slave as a surrogate mother. Sarah’s complaint against Hagar is also clarified by this law code. The slave who bears the master’s children may not consider

herself to have the same legal standing as the wife. Even so, the wife may not sell the slave. But may she drive her out? Is Hagar still a slave or is she a wife?⁸ The writer, hopes for open dialogue with at-risk teenagers regarding the dynamics of “getting into situations that lead to pregnancy” and choices regarding who is in control of these situations.

The second point that we can ascribe to Hagar’s situation is centered on the question, “What is the future of this child?” Hagar takes matters into her own hands, and true to one of the Hebrew meanings of her name, *flight*, Hagar runs away and is found by the Lord’s messenger. Like Hagar, many of our teenage pregnant girls have the tendency to run away. The teenager feels she is alone and her family and friends will not accept her anymore.

Hagar ran away from her mistress because she felt she would become the victim of abusive treatment from Sarai. Today teenagers, once their pregnancy is known, also feels that she will be victimized by family and friends.

The Lord’s messenger found her by a spring in the wilderness, the spring on the road to Shur, and he asked, Hagar maid of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?” She answered, “I am running away from my mistress, Sarai.” But the Lord’s messenger told her: “Go back to your mistress and submit to her abusive treatment. I will make your descendants so numerous,” added the Lord’s messenger, “That they will be too many to count. Besides,” the Lord’s messenger said to her: “You are now pregnant and shall bear a son; you shall name him Ishmael, God has answered

⁸Ibid.

you. The angel assured her of a safe delivery, and that of a son, which Abram desired. She was saved in child-bearing, not but by providence, but by promise. He names the child, which was an honor both to her and it: him Ishmael, *God will hear*; and the reason is that the Lord has heard. Even where there is little of devotion, the God of pity sometimes graciously hears the cry of application. Tears speak as well as prayers.”

In this scripture we hear of Ishmael. The angel is telling Hagar she is now with child and she will bear a son and, to name him Ishmael. The angel added, he will be a wild ass of a man (Genesis 16:12) and have numerous descendents. Ishmael grew up in the eastern Sinai Peninsula where he grew up to be fierce and independent as a wild ass (a prime game animal that was greatly admired).

He became a skillful archer and after Hagar arranged for him to marry a woman of he own country, Egypt, he fathered 12 sons and a daughter who grew up to marry Esau. “As did many other honored patriarchs’, Ishmael lived to an advanced age of 137. His numerous descendants, supposedly the nomadic Bedouins of Arabia, shared his love of the freedom that comes with the dwelling in the wilderness.⁹

God’s divine intervention in Hagar’s life allowed her to change the course of her destiny. God heard her cry. God’s messenger tells her to return to her mistress. As counselors might say to pregnant teens running away from dealing with their situation, go back home, God hears your cry and has a plan for your life. Finally, how does Hagar

⁹Who’s Who in the Bible, *Reader’s Digest* (Pleasantville, NY, Montreal: The Reader’s Digest Association, Inc., 1994), 131-133.

evaluate her own situation --- pride or regret? Hagar submits to the messages of God and returns home to her mistress. There is no sign from Hagar of pride or regret.

It is the hope of the writer that through this model of ministry, teenagers at-risk for pregnancy will see themselves as new persons before pregnancy happens. Through this model of ministry, the seeds of encouragement and empowerment will be planted into the hearts and minds of the participants to get them to focus on God; the problem solver and not the problems they are crying to God about.

Now, we will explore the New Testament for text pertaining to transformation of the mind. Roman 12:1-2 says,

“And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice – the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, that is good and pleasing and perfect.”¹⁰

The writer allows the at-risk teenager to see herself whole, not as someone who has to submit to being a sexual object. Unlike Hagar, she has control of her destiny. But, that too comes with a price. Renita Weems states, “finally, we have only to look around and examine the artifacts of our day --- the headlines, billboards, commercials, advertisements, magazine covers, and the lyrics to our songs --- to notice our modern culture’s fascination with sex.”¹¹

¹⁰ Rom. 12:1-2 (New Living Translation, 2nd Edition).

¹¹Renita J. Weems, *Just a Sister Away: Understanding the Timeless Connection Between Women of Today and Women in the Bible* (New York, NY: Warner Books Edition, 2005), 19.

Seeking New Testament foundations for insight into this population, the writer looked to images of transformation in the midst of difficult situations, temptations, etc.

Nearly all the original materials for the life of St. Paul are contained in the Acts of the Apostles and in the Pauline epistles. Paul was born in Tarsus, a city of Cilicia (it is not improbable that he was born between A.D. 0 and A.D. 5). Up to the time of his going forth as an avowed preacher of Christ *to the Gentiles*, the apostle was known by the name of Saul.¹²

Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the Synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. As he journeyed, he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him "*Saul, Saul why are you persecuting me?*" and he said, "who are you, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "*I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads.*" So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord what do you want me to do?" Then the Lord said to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."¹³ "What wilt thou have me to do?"¹⁴

Paul the apostle became a decision maker. It was through the transformation of his mind that he began making decisions that were to be guidelines for the Christian community.

The writer invited the teenagers who took part in this project to take a good look at Paul's life. According to the scripture, change must be desired and not forced, therefore, teenagers must desire change to occur in their lives and Paul was the example

¹²Smith William, L.L.D., *Smith Bible Dictionary* (Hendrickson Publishers, 1999), 487.

¹³ Acts 9:1-6 (NKJV).

¹⁴Matthew Henry Commentary, Acts 9:6.

used of how tough decisions can be made when there is a change of the mind. Paul surrenders to Jesus Christ. He shows a serious desire to receive instructions from Christ.

A serious desire on the part of our at-risk teenagers to be instructed is the way of salvation and an evidence of good work beginning with transformation of the mind. “A good work was begun in Saul, when he was brought to Christ’s feet, in that word, “Lord what will thou have me to do”¹⁵

The young teenager has to take control of her destiny. She must become a decision maker and she must seek God’s guidance on this pilgrimage. There had to be the establishment of trust between the listener and the teenager. The writer invited the youngsters to listen in faith for the voice of God. Emma Justes wrote: “When we want to hear God we prepare ourselves to be open to receive, to be available to whatever God has for us. But usually in prayer we bring so much to say to God. Even in silent prayer we are the ones doing the speaking to God.”¹⁶

In encouraging the young teenager to listen for the voice of God, the writer believed trust between the teenager and the listener could be established. In various ways scripture offer insight into control, decision making, heart, wholeness and trust. The writer offers the young teenager the opportunity to see how God allows them to be whole, beautiful, and free in their culture. To be transformed proud faith-filled African American young women, their trust in God is the first step to transformation of their minds. Scripture presents a human being as a composite of spirit, soul, and body. Watchman

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Emma Justes, *Hearing Beyond the Words: How to Become a Listening Pastor*, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006), 44.

Nee states that:¹⁷ “The soul is that part of us that stands between the spirit and the body. We have a body in order that we can live in this world, and our spirit is that part of us, that God uses to communicate with us and get to know us better. We are able to get to know God better when we pray and read the Word.

This activity strengthens our spirit. It is our spirit, which is the organ for knowing the will of God. “Our heart,” according to Nee is, “the steward of the spirit, working towards the expression of all, which is in the spirit. Whatever is in the spirit is expressed through the heart “One must believe with the heart. Early on it was mentioned that the word is interchangeable with mind, feeling, intellect and even soul. When one believes with the heart, a change can then take place.”¹⁸

An example of this is found in the Romans 12:2; it states, “Do not conform any longer to the patters of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what the will of God is – God’s good, pleasing, and perfect will.”¹⁹ In the NIV Discovery Study Bible, a guided explanation of God’s word is paraphrased as: Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own world. This interpretation gives a different scriptural explanation on how the voice of God through God’s word, offers insight into control, decision making, heart, wholeness, and trust for the at-risk teenager.

¹⁷ Jean V. Wilson, D.Min. Thesis 2002, *Spiritual Transformation: Training Spiritual Friends to Lead Spiritual Formation Groups in Prayer and Bible Study*(Dayton, OH: United Theological Seminary Library, 2002), 44

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Rom 12:2 (NIV).

Today society is viewed as open and outspoken on the subject of sex. Although this study is not on sex education, it has to address the subject because unregulated and miseducation on the seductive nature of “sex” is how the at-risk teenager becomes pregnant. When you turn on the TV, when you boot-up your computer, when you drive down the street and see billboards, you cannot help but see “sex” in some form. It might come across under disguise, but most likely there will be undertones, which lets you know “sex” is what you are looking at.

Our teenagers feel compelled to be a part of the *today* world. So often the culture and media are giving the wrong signals through the “selling of sex.” That is why this study of Romans 12:1-2 is being discussed here. Transformation defined by Webster II’s dictionary “is an act or instance of transforming or the state of being transformed. To change the nature, function, or condition of; CONVERT.”²⁰ Situations of this population controlled by culture yet can be decisional within it and experience transformation toward wholeness. We say when we receive Christ as our Lord and Savior; we have been converted or transformed.

It was stated by Matthew Henry that “conversion and sanctification are the renewing of the mind, a change not of the substance, but of the qualities of the soul. The

²⁰ Noah Webster, *Webster’s II New Riverside University Dictionary* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1988), 1226.

man/woman is not what he/she was --- old things are become new --- The renewing of the mind is the renewing of the whole man/woman, for out of it are the issues of life.”²¹

The listeners and girls are seeking ways to deal with a particular set of issues of life. Listening leads to dialogue, understanding, and transformation and each are connected to spirituality. Today’s teenager becoming pregnant, in most instances, may be seen as a choice the teenager makes on her own without dialogue or goal setting.

The purpose of this study is to develop guidelines that may be raised in helping individuals at risk for teenage pregnancy. A Biblical foundation suggests that control and decision making are open to guidance by spiritual guides. Edward P. Wimberly wrote in his book, *African American Pastoral Care*, “Pregnancy is crisis for the pregnant mothers as well as for those whose lives are impacted by the pregnancy, which disrupts the ordinary ways the mother thinks, feel, and relates. Emotional upsets, role change, and communication problems must be worked through.” The changes that take place within the expectant mother are normal, but they can cause tension with significant others.

Metabolic changes cause the expectant mother to experience mood swings. Concerns that may arise between the expectant mother and her own mother may cause tension. Any unresolved issues the mother has with sexuality also may surface and cause tension. New roles, as well as adjustments to new circumstances, are required of all involved.

These examples of change brought on by pregnancy show that it is a predictable

²¹Rev. Leslie F. Church, PhD. F.R. Hist.S. Ed, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary in One Volume*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1960), 32.

and normal life crisis. It requires the expectant mother and significant other to make changes in their lives and attitudes. And it is significant that pregnancy provides an opportunity for the pastor and caring persons to respond with empathy and care.

The church takes a significant role when the pastor and caring members enable it to use its natural faith tradition in helping both the at-risk teen and the expectant mother and significant others to be drawn into the unfolding story of God.”²² This project focuses on preparing the listeners to be present in ways that invite mature and spiritually sensitive decision making.

Theological Foundation

The theology of Genesis chapter one portrays human beings; man and woman as living images of God, representatives of and witnesses to God’s power and love toward all creation. Women as well as men bear this responsibility and share this greatness. Women as well as men are made in the image of God. Women as well as men bring God’s touch to the world and its inhabitants. The Israelites were forbidden to make any images of God (Exodus 20:4). They already had images of God in their lives: each other. St. Irenaeus, a second-century theologian, said that “the glory of God is the human being fully alive.”²³ Women and men are the vision of God’s glory on the face of the earth.

²²Edward P. Wimberley, *African American Pastoral Care* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1991), 51.

²³Dale P. Andrew, *Practical Theology and American Folk Religion* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1961), 9.

God did not say in God's creation that God was making any other creature in His image. He intended for women and men to look on each other mirroring God in their presence. Dr. Peggy Way stated in her book *Created by God* "Creation is pronounced "good." To fulfill it, the creature is created from the clay of the earth, and placed in a perfect spot."²⁴ God pronounced that what he had created was good. The young teenager needs to understand that God considers them "good." At the same time human creatures are created finite and vulnerable, and need variety of helps and experiences to live faithfully.

Dale P. Andrews in the introduction to his book, *Practical Theology and African American Folk Religion* states that, "Practical theology is often understood through what it does."²⁵ In ministering to the needs of individuals at risk for teenage pregnancy, it is vital that the pastoral care provider in Black churches "concentrate great efforts in nurturing, teaching coping skills, self-worth and social justice. To this day, the Black church intends to empower the individuals to value oneself while living in a society that does not."²⁶

Emma Justes wrote, "The message, "I see you" is extremely powerful."²⁷ The teenager in the black church I suspect as Emma Justes wrote, is not always feeling *seen* very often, even by those who know them well. When someone says, "I see you, the

²⁴ Peggy Way, *Created by God: Pastoral Care for all God's People* (Chalice Press: St. Louis, Mo.), 31.

²⁵ Andrew, *Practical Theology and African American Folk Religion*, 9.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Justus, *Hearing Beyond the Words*, 46.

teenager feels more like she matters.”²⁸ God is the center of humankind’s existence is what the writer believes. The writer believes that God’s divine revelation is in all that we do. The writer believes that attempting to understand God has classically been seen as “faith seeking understanding.” The Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms by Donald K. McKim, states: “Theology is organized. Some argue that the gospel of Jesus is the material norm and the Bible is the formal norm of theology. Others consider human experience as a norm.”²⁹

This statement grounds the writer’s project by taking seriously the experiences of the girls and listeners, by seeking Biblical perspectives on human decision making and Jesus’ model; and by theological perspectives that value the importance of liberation so one can be decisional and whole.

Black Theology is a Christian theology of liberation. Liberation is the action of liberating someone or something from oppression. After an individual receives knowledge through the Black experience, Black history, Black culture, and revelation, which are avenues of teaching, then the act of liberation, can begin. It is therefore, a theology that “teaches to action.” This is also a Christian theology because, “first there can be no theology of the gospel which does not arise from an oppressed community.”³⁰

Katie Canon wrote “Black feminist consciousness may be more accurately

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Donald K. McKim, *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996). 280.

³⁰ James Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation Twentieth Anniversary Edition* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004), 9.

identified as Black womanist consciousness, to use Alice Walker's concept and definition. As an interpretive principle, the Black womanist tradition provides the incentive to chip away at oppressive structures, bit by bit. It identifies those texts that help Black womanist to celebrate and rename the innumerable incidents of unpredictability in empowering ways. The Black womanist identifies with those biblical characters that hold on to life in the face of formidable oppression. Often compelled to act or to refrain from acting in accordance with the powers and principalities of the external world, Black womanist search the scriptures to learn how to dispel the threat of death in order to seize the present life."³¹ A black or womanist theology will care about women and girls' oppression when society controls and abuses them. James Cone states,

"Black Theology must speak the word of God, in order for it to have power and be relevant to the oppressed community as revealed in Jesus as God whose work is inseparable from the weak and helpless in human society." It is also Christian because it focuses on Jesus Christ. There can be no Christian Theology which does not have Jesus as its point of departure. Moreover, Black Theology best informs the black church's task of teaching to action, since it is a theology that employs receiving knowledge in order to produce action or the act of liberation. This type of liberation is not from something, but is for something or some action."³²

After reading Dr. Cone's book on Black Theology, the researcher was struck with the thought, "where is my understanding of God coming from?" And, if this question is tugging at her, what is the at-risk teenager's struggle with God? This project takes seriously their "caughtness" or "oppression" in not being free to be decisional about

³¹Katie Geneva Cannon, *Katie's Canon: Womanism and the Soul of the Black Community* (New York, NY: The Continuum International Publishing Group, Inc, 2003), 56.

³²James Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004), 76.

sexual activity in a culture of sexuality. Similarly, the listeners may not have been free to claim their own sexuality as a precious gift to be freely discussed in educating the young.

The researcher's understanding of God is grounded in what it means for God to know her enabling her to stand before God in relationship. It is a relational claim, as an act of piety, an act of faith and a theological reflection, her knowledge of God is grounded in the scripture and scripture helps her understand who God is in her life.

The writer's understanding of God was a beginning place to start with the at-risk teenager as well as with the listeners. It was the conversation that needed to be shared in the hopes that these youngsters would come into an understanding of where God is in their particular struggles. Of course the researcher's own religious experiences affect the passion for and development of the project.

The astonishment of the unthinkable and the surprise of the unimaginable, grounds the writer's faithfulness. As the writer has experienced God doing the unthinkable and the unimaginable in her life, she believes, she has been gifted through the Holy Spirit and, responds to God's grace with gratitude. It is important for the spiritual guide to be in touch with such experiences.

Jean V. Wilson wrote in her D.Min thesis, "In bringing about any type of change in a congregation or group, it is the opinion of this writer that the spiritual leader should be truly just that, a "spiritual leader." The spiritual leader should have personally experienced a change in his or her heart in order that he or she can genuinely direct others in what they should do to experience change in their hearts."³³

³³Wilson, D.Min. Thesis 2002, *Spiritual Transformation*, 44.

In *The works of Saint Augustine, A Translation for the 21st Century, The Confessions* reference was made to the rich young man who had wanted to know what to do with his life. He was advised to “learn to do good, champion the orphan and defend the rights of the widows.”³⁴ This advice applies to all Christians to help each other and especially those among us who are in need. “All exist because of God,”³⁵, according to *Augustine*, and therefore, this includes all human beings as God’s children. And when they need help, it is the obligation of Christians to help God’s children. We are indeed our brothers’ and sisters’ keepers, that is, spiritual friends. And while the spiritual friend invites rather than imposes, the invitation is issued through the spiritual friend as a guide. With the invitation, there will be affirmation. The Gospel is a word of promise, and a word of promise equals a word of hope. It gives strength to keep on going and freedom to act because it does not depend upon one’s own strength. With this grounding, it is possible to listen to human need with a sense of hope in even small transformation of both personal and public life.

This study will help listeners to hear the pain participants are experiencing. Like Hagar, do they run? Emma Justes wrote in her book, *Hearing Beyond the Words*, “For many of us, resistance to fully listening comes in the realization that fully listening to

³⁴John E. Rotelle, O.S.A. *The Works of Saint Augustine A Translation for the 21st Century the Confessions* (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1997), 45.

³⁵ Ibid.

another means that we have to let go of control of the situation.”³⁶ A part of this project was inviting the listeners to experience such freedom.

Historical Foundation

It is a woman’s prerogative to wait on the sidelines ready to act in extremes. Indeed, some women have turned waiting into a virtue: we wait to be born, we wait to be married, we wait nine months for new life to be born, we wait, we wait, we wait. “Our waiting witness can be but a passive acceptance of whatever nature and society demand.”³⁷ In keeping with the goals of seeking an historical foundation for this study, the author discovered a book entitled. “Hope in the Holler” *A Womanist Theology* by A. Elaine Brown Crawford. The research gleaned from this project helps to identify the variety of young women who are lost, confused and abused; it undeniably affirms that there is indeed “Hope in the Holler.” (Ms. Crawford argues, as does this writer, that African American Women have lived in the echoes of their own holler. The holler is the primal cry of pain, abuse, violence and separation.)

Ms. Crawford argues that the narratives of African American Women who have suffered victimization through sexual abuse or physical violence reveal a distinctive discourse about hope. “Hope is the theological construct that moves these women beyond endurance to survival and, ultimately, toward the transformation of oppressive

³⁶Emma Justus, *Hearing Beyond the Words*, 34.

³⁷Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa African Women and Patriarchy*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995), 37.

circumstances.”³⁸ Her history and theology come together, as the historical narratives voice theological possibility.

In future work, the author would share more stories of African American women throughout history to witness to the possibilities of transformation even in the midst of confusing times.

The writer presents a guide for defining a desired spiritual grounding for the at-risk teenager as she is invited to her connection with God, experiences involvement with a spiritual guide and begins to give herself over to God. The connection with God brings about transformation and liberation. Our youngsters need to come into an understanding that God is indeed connected in their lives. Being heard and invited to authenticity is the first step.

Internalizing Images

Decision: the Involvement of the Person and Finding a Home

“Hearing and Empowering “Poor” Black Women. There are many images of African American women in the popular culture of the United States. There is one image, associated with the highly profiled, talented, and famous, such as Lena Horne and Oprah Winfrey, which exalts the successful black woman as a symbol of strength, vitality and liberation. Another image, associated with the covers of Newsweek and Time, is the image of the impoverished welfare mother, the resident of public housing projects, the

³⁸A. Elaine Brown Crawford, *Hope in the Holler, A Womanist Theology*, (Louisville, MO: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 89.

teenager mother, and the neglectful, crack-addicted mother, usually rolled up into one monstrous body.”³⁹

The writer’s research gives choices of positive and negative images. This study showed the young at-risk teenager how the involvement of the person (herself), in the right mind set (transformation) would determine which of the images of women she would strive to immolate.

Giving one’s self to God: Toward authenticity and wholeness

“So she turned to Abraham and demanded, “Get rid of that slave woman and her son. He is not going to share the inheritance with my son, Isaac. I won’t have it. --- (Genesis 21:10) “So she turned to Abraham and demanded, “Get rid of that slave woman and her son. He is not going to share the inheritance with my son, Isaac. I won’t have it. (Genesis 21:10) “So we are always confident, even though we know that as long as we live in these bodies we are not a home with the Lord ... Yes, we do have confidence, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.”⁴⁰

“Home is a significant metaphor of life. It not only represents our residential dwelling place of warmth and security, comfort and stability; home represents psychologically and spiritually – the body.”⁴¹ It is the opinion of the writer that the African American church has to be hospitable to these youngsters in their plight. As Ms. Gilkes has stated, the “*Mothers*” have real authority and can nurture these youngsters with “*Hospitality*” at the forefront to gain their confidence, trust and give to them the

³⁹Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, *If It Wasn't For the Women* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books), 196.

⁴⁰2 Cor 5:6,8 (NLT).

⁴¹Lee H. Butler, *A Loving Home Caring for African American Marriage and Families* (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2000), 55.

blessed assurance, by their action, God is the answer.⁴² Transformation of the minds of these youngsters will indeed transform their lives. The listeners, the mothers, and the church offering hospitality can help at-risk teenagers make better decisions and see life as a journey with God's caring presence.

⁴² Gilkes, *If it Wasn't for the Woman*, 98.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

The writer's mission statement reads as follows: "To be a blessing, to help people who are homeless, hungry, depressed and do not know the Lord. To help to bring the word of salvation and survival to those who would hear and whom the Lord will put in our path.

Beginning this project was quite an undertaking, both exciting and challenging. The writer took time to think about her context associates. After much prayer and meditation, the writer decided to ask the Deacon wives (Deaconess) of Calvary Baptist Church of Glenwood, along with a few other mature women in the word of God. After speaking with these women, she was able to bring together the context associates who were willing to work with her on the project. She wanted open listeners who had the capacity to be spiritual guides with persons at-risk.

The first meeting was held at the writer's home to give everyone a chance to understand what role each would be undertaking. Each context associate was given an overview of how this project was to be implemented. Their input was invited and questions and suggestions were welcomed. The writer believed she had taken on an assignment to work with young individuals at-risk for teenage pregnancy in a way that had not been attempted before, at least within the context of her church community. She hoped it would be a process of transforming the thinking and behavior of these young

teenagers. The second meeting was a three day spiritual retreat attended by the Context Associates.

This was a time of reflection and understanding of how the project would impact the lives of those who would be in the leadership listening/counselor role. Each associate was given literature (see Appendix-A) to study and make suggestions on how to use the materials in establishing the listening and counseling sessions with the at-risk teenagers.

The third meeting was held at the writer's home with three of the Context Associates who had committed to working with the writer in establishing the guidelines to be used in these sessions with the at-risk youngsters.

Problem Statement

The purpose of this study was twofold: 1) to reach out to young girls between the ages of 12 and 18 who were currently enrolled in public school grades 6th thru 12th to assess their situations, listen to their needs and create a curriculum for them that would cover the biblical, historical and theological teachings regarding pastoral care and 2) to develop a set of guidelines that may be used in helping individuals at-risk for teenage pregnancy, through an educational event.

The writer believes that much of the pain and suffering experienced by many of today's youth can be alleviated if not prevented, if only appropriate programs were made available. To alleviate such pain and suffering is not only a moral obligation on the part of society; it is the Christian thing to do. Most African American Churches have struggled in dealing with issues of individuals at-risk for pregnancy. This project is

offered to prepare the writer's church in this educational endeavor of planning and implementing a program for at-risk youngsters.

Hypothesis

As young women are provided proper counseling and appropriate services, their attitudes should grow from low self esteem to one of greater self-worth. When their own situations are taken seriously and listened to, the girls may experience themselves as having more worth and decision making strength as they face sexual issues.

CHAPTER FIVE

FIELD EXPERIENCE

The purpose of this model was to bring together mature women of God to work with the at-risk teenager in developing their self esteem and self worth through the guidelines developed. Ultimately the spiritual life of the youngsters through prayer, bible study and individual counseling sessions would give the writer the outcome she was working toward.

The project was initially scheduled to begin September 16, 2007. However, due to a change in pastoral leadership at Calvary Baptist Church of Glenwood, the writer had to go outside the church. On Friday January 11, 2008, a three day retreat was held, facilitated by the writer. In attendance were three women who had been at the first meeting held at the writer's home. These mature women of God were trained to lead small groups in pastoral care and/or spiritual guidance encounters.

Jean V. Wilson's, D.Min. Thesis list the following areas which the mature woman of God (spiritual friend) needs training in to facilitate spiritual group meetings. The researcher shared these in a variety of ways with the listeners.

1. How to facilitate prayer by reading the scripture in a group: The spiritual friend will learn to facilitate *Lectio Divina*, discuss with participants the ways they like to pray, and how to start the group activity with prayer.
2. The importance of learning to listen carefully: The spiritual friend will actively engage with the person who is speaking, setting aside

his/her personal agenda and keeping from distracting thought (especially thinking about what you are going to say next).

3. The importance of learning to trust and establishing trust in the group: The spiritual friend will assure the participants that they will not be anything outside of what their church believes. The friend will assure the participants that what is divulged in the group will stay in the group.
4. The spiritual friend will learn about resolving conflict in the group: the spiritual friend must be familiar with the Biblical principles for conflict management.
5. The spiritual friend will learn to choose apprentice leaders within their groups: Spiritual friends will watch for participants in their group whom they feel will make spiritual leaders for the future spiritual formation groups.”¹

The researcher shared other considerations the spiritual friend/counselor needed to keep in mind. They included issues focusing on sexuality and parenthood. The researcher shared the importance of allowing the young teenager to speak to these issues without feeling compromised.

During the month of January, the three women and the writer met one on one and training took place. After three weeks, the women met again at the writer’s home to come into agreement as to the guidelines to be used for the at-risk teenagers (see Appendix-B). At this session, recruitment methods for the participants were put in place. Although the writer had begun recruitment of participants at Calvary Baptist Church of Glenwood, now, having had to move outside the walls of Calvary, both the writer and professional advisors initiated contact with the Chicago Public Schools.

¹Jean V. Wilson, D.Min. Dissertation, United Theological Seminary

The writer met with the principal and student counselor at one Chicago Public School and requested permission to recruit students. One of the professional advisors (who were of the three faithful women) went into several of the High Schools in Chicago to seek permission from the principals to recruit the participants.

The writer and the professional advisor were given permission to recruit students for the project. The flyers for recruitment were given to the schools, as well as to friends and relatives (Appendix-C).

Project Design, Research Method and Evaluation

Timeline: January 11 – February 8, 2008

To formally present project to Chicago Public Schools, Friends, Relatives and identify individuals that will participate in the project.

Timeline: February 15 – February 29, 2008

To secure parental consent and signed commitment letters from the individuals that agree to participate in the project.

Timeline: March 7 – April 11, 2008

The training will consist of six sessions:

Session I:

2 hour session

Pre Test

Timeline: March 7, 2008

Focus: Dating Quiz

Session II:

2 hour session

Timeline: March 14, 2008

Focus: Good Listening

Session III:

2 hour session

Timeline: March 21, 2008

Focus: Clues to Distinguish Infatuation
from Love

Session IV:

2 hour session

Timeline: March 28, 2008

Focus: Sometimes Sex Sounds a Lot Like
Love, but it's not**Session V:**

2 hour session

Timeline: April 4, 2008

Focus: Why Boundaries Matter**Session VI:**

2 hour session

Evaluation/ Post Test

Timeline: April 11, 2008

Focus: Winning the Prize – The Rewards
of Waiting

CHAPTER SIX

REFLECTION, SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Reflecting upon the beginning of this project, the writer realizes there were many unexpected incidents that happened to drastically alter the original plan of action that this project was founded upon. But, upon reflection, these incidents did not alter the original hypothesis, but gave rise to new ways of working with the at-risk teenagers. This is indeed normative in practical theology and ministerial practice.

Before the launching of this project, the writer was in dialogue and conversation with her pastor, Rev. David Bigsby regarding this model of pastoral care. After they came to consensus regarding methodology, impact on the congregation, exposure in the community and other vital determinants, the writer proceeded to speak with the Deacon's wives about their participation as context associates. They said "yes we will work with you." From the time of recruitment of prospective at risk young women to the actual launching of the project, Pastor Bigsby was replaced by a new pastor, Rev. Moses B. Herring. Rev. Bigsby represented a critical personality and champion for the project implementation within the life of the church. Not only was Rev. Bigsby replaced, the Deacon's wives did not show up for the first meeting.

This turn of events necessitated a contingency plan to acquire person willing to serve as members of a newly established Context team. Once secured, the new group was composed of women of God who were not all members of Calvary. They were friends and family members. The one Calvary member was Vernice White, a friend which the

writer met when she joined Calvary Baptist Church of Glenwood in new member's class. The two of them were involved with the Mission Society Ministry and had worked together for a number of years. Vernice works in the public school system as pre-school teacher.

Then, there was Hortense McDowell, the writer's sister-in-law. Hortense had just celebrated 35 years of teaching children evangelism in the Covenant Church Bible School and is currently the superintendent of her church Sunday school.

Finally, there was the writer's friend, Linda Mitchell-Cooper whom the writer met at an Master of Divinity orientation retreat held by the Chicago Theological Seminary. Both the writer and Linda were beginning their studies for their M.Div. degree and became fast friends. Linda worked as a youth counselor with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. Linda was an ordained/licensed minister. Now that a new context team was assembled, given a through orientation to the project and understood the hypothesis that undergirded the work, they were able to continue and complete the project.

With much opposition and a faulty beginning, the project was taken outside the walls of Calvary. Although the project's base location was changed, the pilot and model that was to be tested with participating at-risk teenagers from within the walls of Calvary and referrals from other churches and Chicago Public Schools was still viable.

As the writer reflects on the initial training of the context associates, she recalls how committed these women were to her project. The initial training began at the spiritual retreat which was held at a resort for three days. There were four women who committed to this training, including the writer. Although this was not what the writer

had anticipated; initially there were six women invited, but again, due to incidents that were not expected, only three women were in attendance. The three women connected with the writer and there was a bonding and excitement that continued throughout the three day retreat/training session.

For future reference, there were several areas of weakness in the facilitation of this project that should be improved upon. First, a greater emphasis and level of commitment is needed to build a team of committed volunteer workers that have a passion for the area of work addressed in this project. Assumptions should not be made that doing a church-based ministry project is a natural for church wide participation. It was clear, based on the lack of participation from among the church body that this project did not get church support, but it was also evident that the congregation did not have infinity for working with at-risk teenagers. This is important because it says that all problems that reveal themselves within the life of a community are not priorities for all congregations.

There should have been extensive work in ascertaining the strongest areas of synergy between writer and context. In retrospect, it is clear that due-diligence is a critical component in finding appropriate intersections of where the journey of the student and the issues and concerns of the context intersect. While there were several noted places within the life of the writer that resembled some of the issues and concerns of the context, deeper probing and questioning must take place to find the central problem statement for doing credible research.

Secondly, there should have been more coordination with social service agencies and other groups to assist in the identification of at risk teenagers. While there may not be

a large contingency of at risk teenagers in worship, statistics show that they exist in larger numbers. One of the prevailing issues with at risk teenagers in today's society is that of acceptability, especially within the life of the church.

The fact that there were so few at risk teenagers participating in this study is a primary indicator that this study and work has validity. Where do at risk teenagers turn, who can they run to, and how do they find peace for the crisis they find themselves in. The Bible records in the Gospel of Matthew chapter 19, Jesus saying, "Let the little come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." This text makes it explicitly clear that we are to be a source of protection and safe sanctuary for our children, especially those who are inherently at risk.

Unfortunately, based on our level of participation from both the context and at risk teenagers, there is a crisis in the land that the church has decided not to see. Either at risk teenagers are not a priority for the churches within the contextual community or the churches within the community has misappropriated its mission and needs a reeducation regarding the theological implication of allowing those who cannot care for themselves to go unprotected.

Never the less, those who participated, both context associates and at risk teenager gain an invaluable experience that will have profound impact on the at risk teenager's lives. Just knowing that there are caring adults who are willing to see them for who they are and for the condition they are in without judgment and condemnation is a necessary first step toward greater numbers of people seeing and being compelled to make a difference.

Appendix A

Literature for Establishing Guidelines For Training of Spiritual Counselors

TRAINING SPIRITUAL COUNSELORS

The Dynamic of Spiritual Listening

Active listening involves not only what you say. This means active engaging with the person who is speaking, setting aside your personal agenda, and keeping yourself from distracting thoughts (particularly thinking about what you are going to say next). Here are some tips for active listening.

WHAT YOU SAY

1. Invite comments from the teenager.
2. Emphasize with teenager's emotions.
3. Explore their statements, seeking more information.
4. Clarify what has been said.

WHAT YOU HEAR

Verbal: the content of what is said. Sometimes we are interested in what we are about to say that we fail to hear the simple facts in a discussion. As you listen, focus on people's names, event, dates and other specific information that is being shared. Nonverbal: how the content is expressed. Here you are listening for congruity; that is, do the nonverbal messages match the verbal messages? Listen for this in three areas:

- Facial expressions – When someone says "I'm okay," does their facial expression actually communicate "I'm a little sad?"
- Tone of Voice – Listen for tones of sarcasm, anger, sadness, enthusiasm, fear, etc.
- Body movement and posture – Are arms and legs crossed and closed? Are people fidgety or relaxed? Does their posture indicate interest or boredom? Remember, you can "hear" a lot just watching people's actions.

Here are some differences between active and passive listening. As a spiritual counselor, how would you rate yourself?

Listening Skills: Passive vs. Active

	Passive Listening	Active Listening
Active	Rejecting, critical <i>"I'm not really interested."</i>	Receptive, accepting <i>"I really want to hear."</i>
Focus	Me – what I want to say <i>"What do I think?"</i>	Other person you think about what others are saying. <i>"What does he mean."</i>
Response	This is what I've been thinking. "I think you should."	Telling first what you heard the other person say.
Message	This is what isn't important <i>"I didn't really hear what you</i>	You heard both the feeling and the need in the message. <i>"I heard what you said."</i>
Results	Frustration, anger. <i>"I don't care."</i>	Satisfaction, willing to Compromise or tell more. <i>"I care about what you said."¹</i>

¹ Bill Donahue, *Leading Life-Changing Small Groups* (Grand Rapids, MI: 1994), 59.

ESTABLISHING SPIRITUAL COUNSELORS

ESTABLISHING TRUST IN A GROUP

Establishing trust in the first meeting. Allow participants to inquire and get the feel for what everyone is here for. Cookies, coffee and more would be appropriate at this time. Answer questions and clarify as many concerns as possible.

Initially, you can ask each participant about their expectations. It is at this time that you can give them an outline for how the group's time will be spent. Always remain flexible and not absolutely wedded to the plan. Always listen for objections that are based on fear of the unfamiliar.²

Agree on the Purpose. The convener and the members must be clear about the purposes of the group. Each individual need to get a sense of the purpose of the group as it relate to them.

One purpose for the group is to learn something about the spiritual experiences of others, past and present. Another purpose is to foster the personal experience of God at a deeper level. A third purpose is to accompany and support each other in our spiritual journeys.³

Make a Commitment. If we ask persons to attend regularly that is a big commitment. If a member cannot come, the convener should be notified so the group can be conscious of the missing person. Secondly, the group participants should pledge to pray for one another during the time between meetings. Thirdly, members must agree to confidentiality. This must be made clear at the first meeting and occasionally repeated.

Time and Place. When there is general agreement as to the group's purpose and the commitment is clear, settle on a time and place for the next meeting. One question that will surely arise is whether this group is to be time limited. Lasting several months to a year, or open-ended, going on as long as there is interest. If there is uncertainty, consider a time with the option to continue.⁴

² Corinne Ware, *Connecting to God: Nurturing Spirituality through Small Groups* (Washington DC: The Alban Institute, Inc.), 23.

³ Ibid., 24.

⁴ Corinne Ware, *Connecting to God: Nurturing Spirituality through Small Groups* (Washington, DC: The Alban Institute, Inc.), 25-26.

TRAINING SPIRITUAL COUNSELORS

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

As relationships in group deepens, conflict is inevitable. A group that experiences no conflict among members is probably either a brand-new group or a group that has not pursued authentic relationships. Let us look at some biblical principles for conflict management and then at some effective conflict management strategies for small group leaders.

Biblical Principles for Conflict Management

The distinction between quarreling and constructive conflict

Quarreling

Seeks to win/ lose

Tends to divide/chose sides

Is an end in itself

Tears down

Usually has a hidden agenda

Comes from a person pushing an issue

Is a battle

Is usually hard

Conflict Management

Leads to win/win

Seeks reconciliation/choose steps

Is a means to an end

Clears path toward something better

Is only about what is in the open

Brought about by necessity in community

Is work

Is usually hard⁵

⁵ Bill Donahue, *Leading Life-Changing Small Groups* (Grand Rapids, MI: 1994), 120.

CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION

You have been asked to take part in a United Theological Seminary Doctor of Ministry project. By signing this form, you are giving permission to use this data/information in a confidential way in the Doctor of Ministry thesis and any future publication. You may reserve the right to drop out of this at any time. However, I request that you notify me in the event you choose to do so.

Occasionally, individuals will have issues arise during this type of study that they would like to discuss with someone else. If you choose to do this, I will assist you.

Ministry Context: Calvary Baptist Church of Glenwood

Pastor: David Bigsby

Context Associate _____

Participant _____

Date _____

APPENDIX B
MEETING GUIDELINES

MEETING AGENDA

Center Down by Listening to Soft Music

Let the participants listen to soft music as they quiet the chaos of the day brought on by the exterior happening in our lives.

Scripture Reading – Each Person Read Scripture

Allow each participant the opportunity to read the scripture as others listen to hear from God. Teach them to read at a somewhat slow pace. Share whatever one receives from God while listening to scripture reading give each participant a chance to share what they heard from God in a word or phrase. Do not allow one person to take up too much time.

Share Weekly Activities

Participants might want to share what happened to them during the week, Make Certain you allow enough time for this activity.

Break-Out Session

Individual time spent with spiritual counselor.

Next Meeting Date

Always get the meeting date and plan for refreshments and the place where the meeting will be held.

Benediction

Source: Jean V. Wilson

APPENDIX C
RECRUITMENT MATERIAL

REV. CARTH A L. MCDOWELL
CALLED TO CARE MINISTRIES
OFFICE: (708) 798-2382
FAX: (708) 798-2050

Dear Student:

During the next several months, I will be conducting a project that is a part of my Doctor of Ministry Program at United Theological Seminary. The name of the project is Ministering to the Needs of Individuals At-Risk for Teenage Pregnancy. The purpose of this project is to name a population of at-risk folks, listen to their situations, and ground a curriculum for them in biblical, historical and theological teaching regarding pastoral care that the church should provide them. Volunteers are needed to participate. If you wish to be a participant, please check YES or NO and turn this letter in after this service.

Yes _____

No _____

Name _____ Phone # _____

Rev. Cartha L. McDowell

APPENDIX D
CONSENT FORM

Parent Consent Form

Today teens are faced with incredible pressures to be sexually active. Being aware of these challenges and pressures as well as the resulting physical, emotional, mental, and social consequences of such activity, our school _____ has chosen to implement A.C. Green's **Game Plan** Abstinence Program as a part of our health education curriculum. **Game Plan** uses a positive sports themed approach to help students consider their future goals and dreams and to recognize the benefits of sexual abstinence until marriage. The eight-session program helps teens to formulate a game plan for their future and helps them to decide for themselves that abstinence is the healthiest choice.

The health teachers in our school have received special training in the **Game Plan** curriculum and are committed to helping each student participating in our regular health and physical education classes to resist negative pressures from media and peers, and to make healthy decisions for their future. Students will receive their own copy of the **Game Plan** workbook to write in and to keep for future reference. The program also makes a specific effort to involve parent interaction and support. Our school is dedicated to academic excellence and helping you to help your child succeed.

We ask that you complete the form below concerning whether or not you wish to have your child participate in this program. Once completed, please have your child promptly return the form to the school.

Thank you,

Principal

Child's Name: _____

☐ I would like my child to receive a Game Plan workbook and to participate in this program.

☐ I would not like my child to participate in this program.

Parent Signature

APPENDIX E
COMMITMENT LETTER

COMMITMENT LETTER

1. I will covenant to complete the entire process.
2. I will pray regularly for my fellow group members.
3. I will covenant to attend each week as well as meet with my spiritual counselor each week during this project.
4. I will participate in all group sessions unless urgent circumstances beyond my control prevent my attendance. When unable to attend, if there is something to make up, I will do so at the earliest possible time.
5. I will participate, openly and honestly in sessions.
6. I will keep confidential any personal matters shared by others in the group.
7. I will be patient with my Christian brothers and sisters and my church as God works in us all to make us what God wants us to be. I will trust God to convince others of God's will. I will not try to manipulate or pressure others to do what I think is best. I will simply bear witness of what I sense God may be saying to us and watch to see how the Spirit uses that witness.
8. I will pray at least weekly for my pastor and my church.

Others _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Group Members: _____

APPENDIX F
ADDITIONAL COUNSELING TRAINING FORMS

DATING QUIZ

What are the purposes of dating? (list at least 3)

How many times a week should you “see” (be with) the person you are dating? ____

How many times a week/hours a day should you talk on the phone? ____

How long should a date be? (a) 2 hrs (b) 3 hrs (c) 4 hrs (d) 6 hrs (e) ____

List at least 10 activities appropriate for a date.

<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>

1. After dating for some time, what will the next step be?
2. In case of a break up, how will you handle this?
3. Do you think it is important to keep both sets of parents informed of dating relationships?
If “yes,” how will you do this? If “no,” why not?
4. What are your standards for physical intimacy while dating?
(please be specific: i.e. holding hands, kissing, etc.)
5. How much of your dating time will be alone together, and how much will be with others (friends, family, groups)?
6. What is a good hour to return home from a date?
(a) 10:00 PM (b) 11:30 PM (c) 12:00 midnight (d) 2:00 AM (e) _____

GOOD LISTENING

Listening is the single most validating and empowering thing you can do for your child when you do it with loving responsiveness. Your child wants you to understand and to validate that he/she is important enough to be listened to. Think to yourself: “If my child wants to say something to me, it is important because he/she is important and has important thoughts.” It “works” because you are demonstrating both faith in your child and attention to him/her. Even when you think you know exactly what your child is saying, you need to back off and listen.

Some Strategies for Good Listening

- Whenever your child initiates conversation, you will need to listen.
- If you ask your child a question, listen to the answer.
- If you want to be understood, take time to listen to your child’s response to what you say.
- Don’t interrupt unless absolutely necessary – and that means only in a real emergency.
- Rid yourself of urgency. You will always have enough time to set a child straight after you listen.
- You can learn the patience you need for responsive listening with practice. To borrow from Ben Franklin, listening is “a stitch in time that saves nine.”
- Listening is the best way to discover unmet needs.
- Listening is an excellent way to show your faith in your child.

With the young child (toddler stage), give your child words he can use to share his feelings, make requests, register discomfort or express anger as well as delight and satisfaction so he doesn’t have to act this anger out on other kids, adults or things. The child age seven to fourteen wants even more to be heard. Even if you must say “no,” your child knows you are listening. The fourteen to twenty-one year old probably does best when the parent can create “casual” opportunities for listening as often as possible.

TECHNIQUES FOR SUCCESSFUL LISTENING

- Watch your own body language – try to stay relaxed.
- Face your child – make eye contact.
- Unfold your arms in a gesture of openness and receptivity.
- If you're in the middle of something important, ask him/her to be patient until you can listen attentively. A child can go up to ten minutes. Teenagers can usually wait about twenty minutes or more without feeling neglected or unimportant. Let the phone ring, put down the book you are reading.
- Speak quietly and calmly when you do respond.
- Don't interrupt – hear your child out.
- Try to be in a place where it's comfortable to talk.
- Take your time responding – good answers require first good listening and then good thinking.
- Practice nods and grunts that symbolize listening and interest, such as
 - “Oh, really
 - “Uh-huh”
 - “Hmm”
 - “Go on – and then?”
 - “I can hardly believe it”
 - “Mm-mmm”
- Use open-ended questions whenever possible. “What?” and “How?” are good words to begin a question because they “open” the conversation further by asking for the child's point of view. Avoid asking questions that can be answered by a simple “yes” or “no.”
- Practice reflective listening. You do your best listening when you reflect what you hear, like a mirror. You repeat more or less what you hear as a listener, rather than projecting what you want to hear or think or feel. The great power of reflective listening comes from its validation of the speaker: someone is actually listening.

Sometimes **Sex** sounds a lot like **Love**, but it's not.

"I want you."
 doesn't mean
"I want the best for you."

"I'll be careful."
 doesn't mean
"I care about your feelings."

"You're my lover."
 isn't the same as
*"You're my one and only
 lover."*

"It's so great, I want it now."
 isn't the same as
*"You're so great, I'll wait for
 you."*

"You're beautiful."
 doesn't mean
*"I love you for your inner
 beauty."*

"It feels good."
 doesn't mean
*"I want you to feel good
 about yourself later."*

"I need you."
 isn't the same as
*"When you need me, I'll be
 there for you."*

"Let's make love."
 isn't the same as
*"I love you. I'll commit to
 you a lifetime."*

Sex is not the same as **Love**
 no matter how similar they sound.

THE REWARDS OF WAITING

Waiting until marriage to have sex will make your dating relationship better. You will spend more time getting to know each other.

Waiting will help you find the right mate (someone who values you for the person you are).

Waiting will increase your self-respect.

Waiting will gain the respect of others.

Waiting teaches you to respect others (you'll never pressure anyone).

Waiting takes the pressure off you.

Waiting means a clear conscience (no guilt) and peace of mind (no conflict, no regrets).

Waiting means a better sexual relationship in marriage (free of comparisons with other premarital partners, free of sexual flashbacks, and based on trust). By waiting, you are being faithful to your spouse even before you meet him or her.

By practicing the virtues involved in waiting – such as faithfulness, self-control, modesty, good judgment, courage, and genuine respect for self and others – you are developing the kind of character that will make you a good marriage partner and attract the kind of person you would like to marry.

RULES FOR THE FAMILY

In a unified, healthy family, parents teach mostly by example and directed practice. Therefore, the rules of the family all begin with the word “We” ... We respect the rights and feelings of everyone.

We say to everyone: Please, thank you, I’m sorry, I give my word.

We do not interrupt; we wait to talk. If the matter is urgent, we say “Excuse me, please.”

We do not make promises lightly; if we do make a promise, we keep our word.

We respect each other’s privacy and personal property; we knock before entering a closed room and get prior permission before borrowing.

If we have offended someone, we apologize – even if we did not mean to give offense.

We all contribute to make our home an attractive, civilized and efficiently run place to live.

If we accidentally make a mess, we clean it up.

Males do not wear hats or caps indoors.

We hang up clothing when not in use; all clothing is in one of three places – on us, in closets and dressers, or in the laundry for cleaning.

If we are old enough to do so, we make our own beds in the morning.

We put playthings and tools away when not in use.

If we’ve eaten off of or drunk out of something, then we rinse it or wash it and put it away where it belongs.

If we’ve borrowed something, we return it where it belongs; if we lost a borrowed item, we either replace it or pay for it.

We fulfill “house responsibilities” (chores) promptly and to the best of our ability.

We give people the information they need to carry out their responsibilities.

When we go out, we always inform; Where? With whom? When will I return?

If we are going to be late, we call.

We get prior permission, with at least one day's notice, for sleepovers, camping trips and the like. Insufficient notice may mean no permission.

We bring home all new friends and introduce them to parents.

We return from social events at a reasonable hour, one that has been previously agreed upon.

We take phone messages intelligently: name of caller, time called, phone number of caller (if applicable), message (if any), name or initials of person who took the call.

We use the media to promote family life and welfare; we do not permit the media to work against family life and welfare.

We use nothing in the home that offends our moral principles and treats people as mere objects (materialism); this means no pornography, no gratuitous violence, games, music lyrics and posters.

We will watch T.V. and video movies together: sports, high quality films and programs, news and documentaries ... and that's it.

We devote most of family life to healthy work and play, not glued to a tube.

We spend our time in conversation, reading, study, chores and games – getting to know and to appreciate each other.

CLUES TO DISTINGUISH LOVE FROM INFATUATION

CLUES	CHARACTERISTICS
Question to Ask	It's Infatuation
It's Love	
What is your main interest?	- The nature of attraction:
- The total personality: what's in	Physical; what responds to the
What attracts you most?	ethical, and physical being
the intellectual, emotional, social,	
five senses	
How did the romance start?	- Fast (hours or days)
- Slowly (months or days)	
Took time to grow	
What effects does the romance	- Highs and lows, can keep you
- Organized, constructive, you're a	consumed
have on your personality?	
better person	
How does it end?	- Fast, unless the couple has
- Slowly takes a long time; you may	been sexually active
never be the same	
How do you view each other?	- You live in a one-person world.
- You add the relationship to former	You see the other as faultless,
ones. You are more realistic,	or idealize him or her
admitting other's faults, but love	
them anyway	
What does distance or periods of	- Creates stress; can wither away,
- Survives; may even grow stronger.	break up
long separation do to the	
Committed to working through the	
relationship?	
distance	

How do quarrels affect the romance?

- When they happen the couple tries

relationship to work out disagreements

- They get more frequent, more

severe and will kill the

How do you feel about and refer to

- Speaks of we/us/our;

your relationship?

feel and think as a unit, a pair,

togetherness

- Much use of the I/me/my;

He/him/his; she/her/hers;

little feeling of oneness

What's your ego response to the

- Mainly unselfish, releasing;

others?

concerned equally for the other

- Mainly selfish, restrictive;

"What does this do for me?"

What's your overall attitude for the

- Attitude of giving, sharing; wants

other?

To serve other's needs and wants

- Attitude of taking

What is the effect of jealousy?

- Less frequent, has a base of trust

- More frequent, more

Possessive

Characteristics to Look for:

Committed Love

Infatuation

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